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Cover:
126 Canadian Disability
Hall of Fame Inductees.
1993 to 2023



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CFPDP EVENTS

Mark your calendar for CFPDP's upcoming events in 2024

Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, a charitable organization founded in 1985, assists people with physical disabilities to live fuller lives. Its mission is to create awareness in the public, business communities and government of the abilities of persons with disabilities and their needs in the areas of housing, employment, education, accessibility, sports and recreation and research. In the past 39 years, the Foundation has raised substantial funds, which it has distributed to a wide variety of organizations and events. These include the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame, the Eternal Flame of Hope, Canadian Helen Keller Centre and accessible housing for deafblind people, the annual Great Valentine Gala, the King Clancy Awards, the Corporate Awards, A Seat at the Table, the WhyNot Marathon, the first Canadian Marathon for the Paralympics, Jeff Adams' CN Tower climb, Rolling Rampage Wheelchair 10K Road Race and Rolling Rampage on the Hill.

MESSAGES



I happily extend greetings to everyone in attendance at the 30th Canadian Disability Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon!

For three decades, the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame has been a

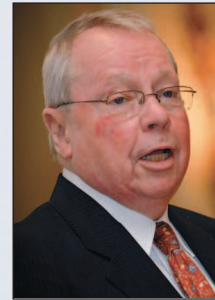
champion of people with disabilities, admirably and courageously shining a light on their talents, as well as their aspirations. The Hall of Fame has also celebrated role models whose excellence and achievements have had a positive impact on the disability community.

Today, as we celebrate the extraordinary achievements of three remarkable Canadians whose efforts have enriched the lives of people with physical disabilities, we continue to uphold our shared vision of a more inclusive and accessible Canada.

As His Majesty The King's representative in Ontario, and as honorary patron of the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, I happily congratulate this year's inductees. So, too, do I offer my gratitude to everyone who has supported this noble endeavour through the decades.

This comes with my best wishes for a memorable luncheon.

The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell
The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario



As Chair of the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame, I am delighted to celebrate our landmark 30th year and honour our latest inductees.

Three highly accomplished individuals are joining the prestigious

ranks for 2023 alongside 123 previous inductees. Each was chosen from a group of exceptional achievers.

Chantal Benoit is widely recognized as the greatest female wheelchair basketball player in history. She was remarkably successful over two decades with the national team program. Benoit is a seven-time Paralympian, with three gold medals and a bronze, and a four-time world champion.

As Canada's 22nd Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen J. Harper empowered a team in cabinet and through Federal appointments that would help improve life for the disability community. His government both initiated and implemented many policies that support people with disabilities and helped advance the Paralympic movement.

Michelle Stilwell is a six-time Paralympic gold medallist, nine-time world champion and multiple world record holder. She has excelled in politics, serving two terms as a Member of BC's Legislative Assembly, and is a successful company leader and board director.

Thank you to our current and past inductees for their meaningful impact.

I would also like to convey my deepest appreciation to the Hall of Fame's Selection Board and the entire CFPDP team for their outstanding work.

The Honourable David Crombie
Chair, The Canadian Disability Hall of Fame



With immense pride, I welcome you to the 30th Annual Canadian Disability Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon. It is our great pleasure to recognize the talented individuals and dedicated changemakers

who are making Canada the best country in the world for people with disabilities.

We have had the privilege of bestowing recognition upon remarkable Canadians who have aspired to greatness, realized their ambitions and left a lasting impact. As we mark three decades of inductions, three more distinguished people are joining this illustrious community.

Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP) was founded in 1985 with a core mission to enhance the quality of life for individuals facing physical challenges. With that in mind, we work passionately to raise awareness of the contributions made by people with physical disabilities.

CFPDP has established and managed many important initiatives over almost four decades. Our efforts have profoundly influenced and continue to reshape societal perceptions to focus on abilities.

We sincerely appreciate your ongoing support for the Hall of Fame, Canada's only permanent exhibit dedicated to celebrating accomplishments within the disability community. Thanks to the Honourable David Crombie for his unwavering dedication as Chair of the Selection Board since its inception. We are also grateful to George Przybylowski and Tony Wight for being Co-Chairs of this year's event.

The Honourable Vim Kochhar
Chair, Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons



As a decades-long volunteer Board member for CFPDP, I am proud to join the organizing team for the 30th Annual Canadian Disability Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon.

The Hall of Fame serves several important purposes. In addition to recognizing people who have made outstanding contributions, it inspires others to strive for excellence in their chosen fields. The inductees are role models, showing us what can be achieved through caring, dedication and hard work. It also preserves history and legacy, ensuring that achievements in the disability community will be remembered for generations to come.

The entire CFPDP team congratulates our 2023 inductees and those who have preceded them. You make us all very proud.

We also salute the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame Selection Board. You have been dedicated, diligent and meticulous in the induction process.

At the same time, we express our deepest gratitude to everyone who continues to support the Hall of Fame and to those who show up to celebrate with us each year. We could not do what we do without you.

Finally, we must recognize the Honourable Vim Kochhar. He founded CFPDP and the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame at Toronto's Metro Hall many decades ago. To this day, Vim continues to give his whole heart in service to the disability community.

George Przybylowski
Co-Chair, The Canadian Disability Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon
Director, Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons



It brings me immense joy to extend greetings on behalf of the team responsible for organizing the 2023 Canadian Disability Hall of Fame celebration. It is hard to believe that three decades

have passed since the Hall of Fame was first unveiled at Metro Hall in Toronto. What a wonderful 30 years it has been watching this project grow, educate and celebrate.

Heartfelt congratulations to our newest inductees. You have made outstanding contributions within your respective domains, whether on fields of play, in communities nationwide or as impactful changemakers.

The Hall of Fame Selection Board is also greatly appreciated. We are thankful for your ongoing commitment and investment of time. Your efforts allow us to shine a spotlight on incredible individuals within our country's disability community, enabling everyone to join in the celebration of their remarkable achievements.

We are sincerely grateful for the continuous support of our dedicated patrons, sponsors, attendees, donors, and volunteers. Together, we are creating real change and making a meaningful difference in how Canadians view physical disability.

I also want to recognize the Honourable Vim Kochhar and his significant contributions to Canada's disability community. The Foundation's accomplishments over the years would not have been possible without his astute guidance and selfless dedication.

Tony Wight
Co-Chair, The Canadian Disability Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon
Director, Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons



Welcome to the Hall of Fame

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF INDUCTEES

This is a milestone year for the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame (CDHF). The 30th annual event marks three decades of inductions, signifying an enduring legacy of outstanding achievements and contributions. It is also a landmark celebration in honouring excellence and inspiring future generations to aspire to greatness.

In 2022, Canada's disability community gathered to recognize nine inductees, three each from 2022, 2021 and 2020. This was a unique CDHF gathering because of the inability to hold in-person events for two years during the global health crisis. Following the pandemic lockdowns, attendees were overjoyed to reconnect and come together for the event.

As always, the ceremony embodied the quintessential Hall of Fame experience, featuring distinguished inductees, VIP guests, steadfast sponsors, devoted volunteers and a vibrant crowd of hundreds. Together, they witnessed the official induction of new members into the esteemed CDHF community of Achievers, Athletes and Builders.

"We have had an abundance of exceptional nominees over the past 30 years," said the Honourable David Crombie, who has chaired the CDHF Selection Board since the Hall of Fame's inception. "It gets harder every year for our Selection Board to name a single inductee in each category because of the extraordinary calibre of the candidate pool. We congratulate all the



Canadian Disability Hall of Fame at Metro Hall, Toronto

inductees and nominees for their professional and personal excellence."

Earning a place in the Hall of Fame is the most prestigious accolade bestowed by the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP). Inductees are recognized for their exceptional individual achievements, professional accomplishments and profound impact on improving the lives of people with disabilities.

The 2022 CDHF inductees include retired athlete and influential leader of sport Josh Dueck. Inducted in the Achiever category, the two-time Paralympian won multiple medals and was the closing ceremonies flag-bearer at Sochi 2014. In the years before his second

2022 INDUCTEES

Paralympic Games, Dueck became the first sit skier to complete a backflip. This 2012 feat landed him on the Ellen DeGeneres Show and as a National Geographic Adventurer of the Year. Since his retirement, Dueck has continued to advance the Paralympic movement, including leading the 2022 Canadian Paralympic Team to Beijing as Chef de Mission. He is also an ambassador for several organizations and a mentor to others with life-altering injuries.

Human rights lawyer and accessibility advocate Lorin MacDonald was inducted in the Builder category in 2022. She has created positive change in many ways, including a landmark human rights ruling that declared restaurants could not discriminate against people with disabilities by denying access to their washrooms. Before law school, MacDonald helped organize a forum encouraging Ontario's government to enact stronger disability legislation. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was introduced six weeks later and became law in June 2005. Also passionate about communications inclusion, she created HearVue to demonstrate the benefits of captioning for diverse audiences. Thanks to MacDonald's efforts, captioning is now at the forefront of accessibility

in many places where it was previously unavailable, including live entertainment venues, universities and several Ontario social justice tribunals.

Inducted in the Athlete category, Para hockey great Greg Westlake represented Canada proudly over an impressive career spanning a decade and a half. Now retired, he won gold during his Paralympic debut in 2006, then added silver and bronze medals in subsequent Games. Westlake was captain of Canada's Para ice hockey team (2010-2019) and a flagbearer for the opening ceremonies at Beijing 2022. He is also a nine-time world championship team member with three



Josh Dueck



Lorin MacDonald



Greg Westlake

2021 INDUCTEES



Vivian Berkeley



Frank Folino



The Honourable
Carla Qualtrough

2020 INDUCTEES



Martha Sandoval Gustafson



Tim Cormode

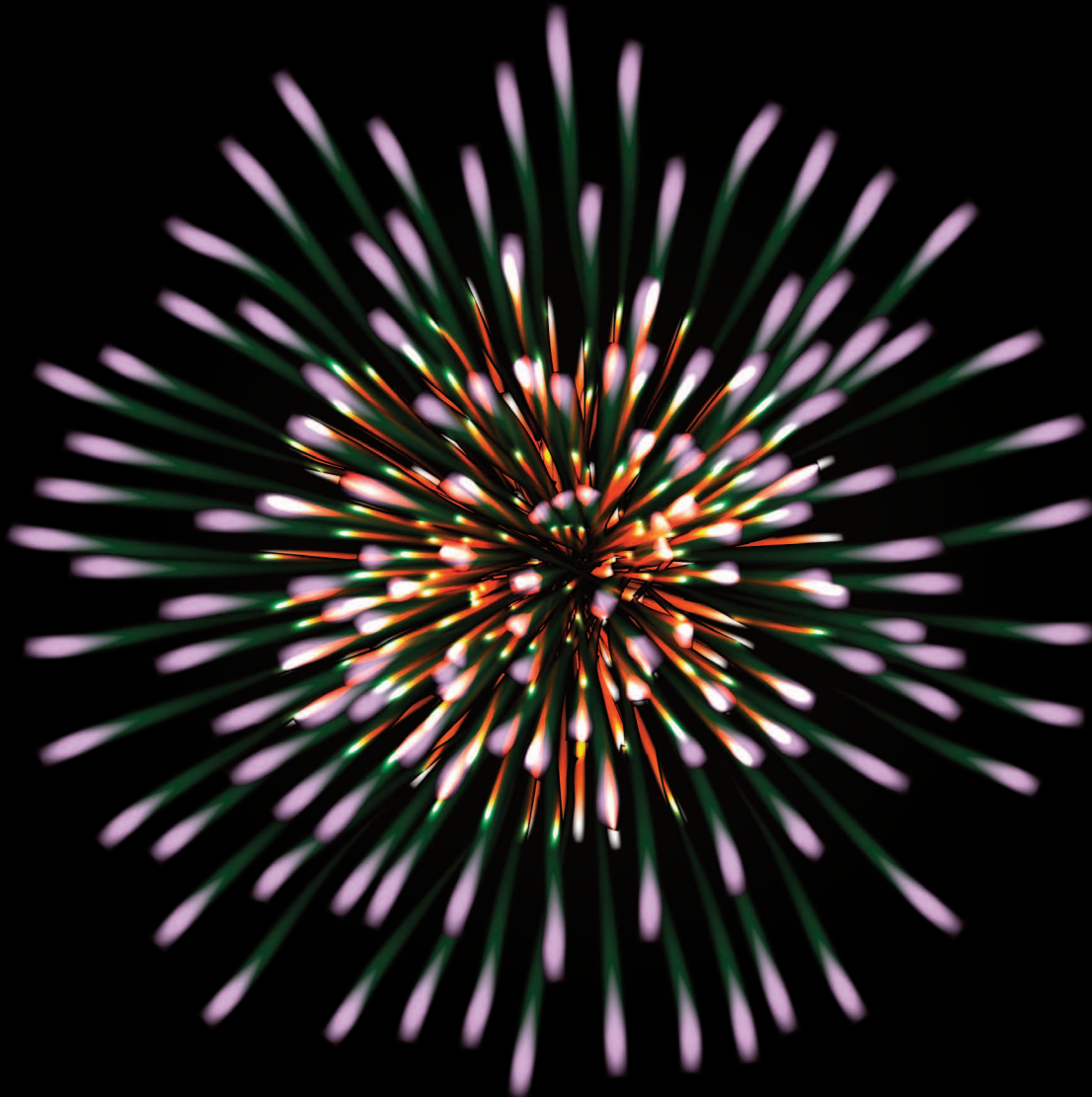


Meenu Sikand

world titles. Off the ice, Westlake is a dedicated leader, role model and volunteer. He also mentors children with a similar disability.

"Our 2022 inductees have demonstrated incredible passion and achieved the highest levels of success in their professional endeavours. We were proud to honour them alongside our remarkable inductees from 2021 and 2020," said the Honourable Vim Kochhar, who founded CFPDP and CDHF. "We are so proud of all the Hall of Fame inductees for achieving excellence while actively contributing to a more inclusive nation for every Canadian."

Deloitte.



Congratulations!

Deloitte congratulates
the 30th annual Canadian
Disability Hall of Fame inductees

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Located in downtown Toronto on the ground floor of Metro Hall, 55 John Street, the Hall of Fame recognizes outstanding achievement in sports, health and rehabilitation, science and medical research, advocacy, public policy, volunteerism and community service.

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FOUNDING CHAIR The Honourable Vim Kochhar, *Chair, Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons*

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FROM TRADITION TO TRANSFORMATION: The Drive to Diversify Canada's Corporate Boards



When it comes to corporate governance, the Honourable Vim Kochhar's name stands out as a beacon of change and inclusivity. The visionary "A Seat at the Table" initiative he created through Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP) has embarked on a journey to reshape the landscape of Canadian corporate boardrooms. It was born from a deep commitment to creating more diverse and representative board leadership where disabled individuals have a strong presence and voice.

When Hon. Kochhar first set out in 2019 to address the issue of disability diversity and inclusion in corporate boardrooms, he foresaw the transformative expedition ahead. He began writing letters to hundreds of Canadian companies and posing a crucial question – did their boards include anyone with a physical disability?

While almost one in five Canadians identify as a person with a disability, Hon. Kochhar could not identify one person in a corporate boardroom who did so at the time.

Instead, there was a prevailing emphasis on gender equality in corporate Canada. Public companies were fervently working to increase the representation of women at the board level. The federal government had even mandated reporting on this progress. However, until 2020, there was no similar requirement to address other forms of underrepresentation.

For Hon. Kochhar, this status quo was untenable. So, he took action to create change.

The Path Forward

Working behind the scenes, Hon. Kochhar brought together an influential group of leaders. CEOs, top executives from Bay Street, representatives from charitable and media organizations, and chancellors from some of Canada's most prestigious universities joined forces. They shared a common vision – to identify highly qualified Canadians with physical disabilities deserving of a seat at the table in corporate boardrooms.

Fast forward to 2023 and the wheels of change are moving.

More than 30 highly qualified candidates selected through the CFPDP program are being actively promoted for board positions.

One of the candidates was appointed in July 2021 to the Amex Bank of Canada board.

Crown Corporations are reaching out and encouraging applications from CFPDP's candidates.

Headhunting firms are getting in touch regarding board search projects.

CFPDP is hearing from public companies wanting to be in touch with candidates.

Professional organizations nationwide are enthusiastically promoting "A Seat at the Table," leveraging the collective power of their social media channels, newsletters and websites to encourage applications and raise awareness.

The Globe and Mail continues helping CFPDP to challenge corporate Canada and identify new applicants by generously donating full-page ads.

And with planning for the next Selection Board underway, the applications continue to roll in.

"The lack of representation on corporate boards is not because there are no qualified candidates with disabilities," says Hon. Kochhar. "CFPDP has received hundreds of applications, including many from individuals with executive-level experience. We hear from lawyers, CPAs, finance and ESG professionals, real estate developers and marketing leaders with disabilities who are ready to bring their expertise to the boardroom table. The next step is to match them with opportunities, so we need all of corporate Canada to commit to recruiting diverse candidates."

The first numbers, published in the 2020 Osler Report on Diversity, confirmed Hon. Kochhar's informal research. They revealed that only a handful of boardroom seats at TSX-listed and Canada Business Corporations Act (CBCA) companies subject to disclosure requirements were filled by a disabled person. In 2022, Osler reported 10 board positions held by persons with disabilities at CBCA companies. Additionally, companies not subject to the CBCA reporting requirement voluntarily disclosed five directors with disabilities.

"We set an initial goal to see at least one percent of directors on public company boards in Canada identify with a disability," adds Hon. Kochhar. "Our team will continue working until we surpass that objective and then aim even higher."

SELECTION BOARD

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THE TRADITION CONTINUES

MEET THE CANADIAN DISABILITY HALL OF FAME 2023 INDUCTEES

This year's Hall of Fame inductees continue a great tradition of athletic excellence, advocacy and leadership.



CHANTAL BENOIT *Athlete*

“Chantal Benoit is an icon of women’s wheelchair basketball.” This sentence, penned when she was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2018, perfectly describes the phenomenal player and person who spent more than 25 years with the national team program.

Benoit made the national team in 1984, just one year after she started playing the sport. Today, the seven-time Paralympian with four medals (three gold, one bronze) and four-time world champion is widely recognized as the greatest female wheelchair basketball player in history. Benoit also received the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation Gold Medal Triad Award for her impact on the sport's growth.

While picking just a few of the most memorable moments from her storied career is challenging, Benoit names two that rise above the others. “The initial medal performance in St. Etienne, France stands out as a start of great things to come from our national team, but the first gold medal performance in Barcelona ... will stay with me and I am sure all teammates forever,” she says.

That game was played in front of a packed house of 18,000 fans. Winning gold in Barcelona, Atlanta and Sydney is a feeling that Benoit will remember forever. “We were ecstatic with Barcelona, felt fantastic in Atlanta despite a smaller crowd, and relived the Spanish experience down under,” she recalls proudly.

Nicknamed “Neuf” for her iconic number nine jersey, Benoit is also called the “Michael Jordan of women's wheelchair basketball” because of her dominance on the court. Additionally, Benoit stands out as a passionate role model.

“I worked hard to do the best I could on the court each time and encouraged my teammates to do the same,” says

Benoit. “Like so many athletes over the years, we see growth in our own self-awareness. We tend to become more positive over the years as a product of our education, and that usually leads to becoming a little more empathic and humbler. At the end of the day, we all strive to be as professional as we can with an eye on ensuring we approach life on and off the court with a high degree of integrity.”

Indeed, Benoit is widely recognized for her contributions to wheelchair basketball and advocacy of inclusive sport. She believes sport is essential for many reasons.

“Sport promotes healthy living in a physical, mental, and social sense,” she says. “In the case of sport for athletes with a disability, we can see where their involvement has resulted in a change in their behaviour and, perhaps more importantly, the societal changes that stem from their actions. Sport does create change in every aspect that impacts all persons with a disability.”

In addition to sport and inclusivity, Benoit has always believed strongly in French immersion and promoting bilingualism. In 2023, an elementary school was named after her in Sharon, Ontario. École Élémentaire Chantal-Benoit now stands as a proud tribute to her legacy.

“I was blown away with the honour of having the school named after me,” says Benoit, adding that the students had been challenged to look at many people with the view of naming the school after a person. “They dug up information from all over and somehow decided that an athlete with a disability who played wheelchair basketball was the one. It is amazing because there are a lot of other athletes around in other sports that get a lot more attention than wheelchair basketball. The grand opening of the school was a fantastic event, and I will appreciate every opportunity I have to visit the school and share whatever I can.”



DRAWINGS BY SHANNON PARKS

During his time in office, the Right Honourable Stephen J. Harper dedicated significant efforts and resources towards improving the lives of people with disabilities.

As Canada's 22nd Prime Minister, he empowered a team in cabinet and through Federal appointments that would help make life better for the disability community.

"As the first severely disabled person elected to Parliament and the first to be appointed to the cabinet, [I believe] Stephen Harper's motivation to empower individuals, no matter how fast they can run, is genuine and deep," says the Honourable Steven Fletcher.

The Harper government initiated and implemented more than two dozen key policy areas that help persons with disabilities. This includes the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP), introduced in 2008 by the late Honourable Jim Flaherty, Rt. Hon. Harper's appointee as Minister of Finance. Recognizing the financial hardship that people with disabilities often face, the RDSP is a long-term savings plan that helps them and their families save for the future. Canada Disability Savings Grants and Canada Disability Savings Bonds were introduced alongside the RDSP to encourage savings and support the financial security of the person with a disability. The government matches contributions to RDSPs with grants based on the beneficiary's adjusted family net income. Bonds provide additional support for low-income and modest-income families.

The Harper government enhanced the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, which is designed to help individuals prepare for, obtain and maintain employment or self-employment. The program aims to remove obstacles to the labour market and supports employers to hire people with disabilities. This is accomplished through wide-ranging programs and services, including skills enhancement, vocational training, job search supports, wage subsidies and work placements.

Through the Enabling Accessibility Fund established in 2007, the Harper government supported programs to improve the accessibility of public spaces and workplaces. Numerous accessibility projects across Canada have been funded through this program.

While it is impossible to detail everything his government achieved, Canada ratified the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. The Harper government amended the Canadian Human Rights Act in 2012 to strengthen protections for persons with disabilities, and changes to the Veterans Affairs system improved services and benefits for veterans with disabilities. The Disability Tax Credit was improved to make it more accessible and provide greater tax relief to Canadians with disabilities and their families. Another tax credit introduced in 2011 provided financial support to family members who care for relatives with disabilities or other long-term health conditions. And the list goes on.

In the area of sport, the Harper government helped to advance the Paralympic movement and the Special Olympics. Initiatives included significant financing for the 2010 Winter Paralympics held in Vancouver, ongoing annual funding for the Canadian Paralympic Committee, and financial support for the Special Olympics.

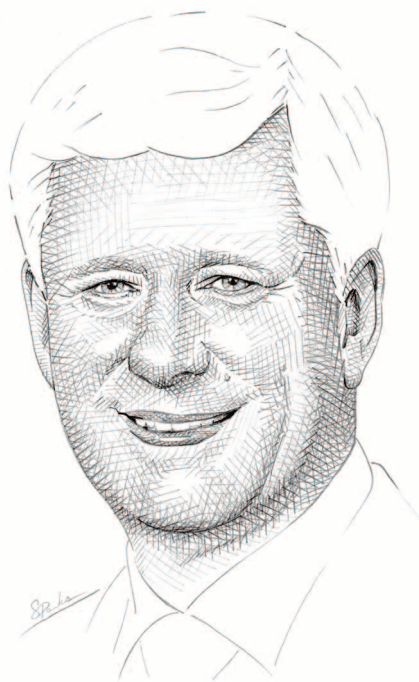
"I had the honour to be a member of Prime Minister

Harper's cabinet, serving as the Minister for Sports. During this time, our government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Harper, created and established many different programs which encouraged professional para-Olympians," says the Honourable Baljit Gosal. "As Prime Minister, Stephen Harper committed to the success of all Canadians. He invested in programs that encouraged the development of all our athletes, with a focus on inclusivity. Alongside sports programs, he provided the funding to establish training facilities that are accessible, that can be used for many years to come."

"Without a doubt, Mr. Harper has opened numerous doors for people with disabilities. He has done so by implementing key policies and building a team of advocates who supported his

vision of creating a better country for all Canadians, including those who live with disability," says Rick Hansen, Founder of the Rick Hansen Foundation.

"The Canadian Disability Hall of Fame celebrates individuals who have made a significant difference towards improving the lives of people with disabilities. It also recognizes incredible achievements by members of our disability community from across the country," says Rt. Hon. Stephen J. Harper. "I am honoured to be inducted, although the honour is really due to many who served in our government. With that in mind, I must recognize the many Canadians who worked alongside me. Our government could not have accomplished all that it did without their contributions."





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There are many ways to describe a champion. They exemplify excellence, rise above challenges and have an unwavering commitment to reach their goals. Michelle Stilwell is all this and more.

Growing up in Manitoba, Stilwell competed in numerous sports, including basketball, athletics and ringette. She had a dream of becoming a flight attendant and travelling the world. Instead, Stilwell would go on to travel the globe not as an airline employee but as an exceptional athlete, champion of sport and business leader.

At 17, Stilwell became a quadriplegic after falling backwards on a staircase while piggyback riding on a friend. She was introduced to wheelchair basketball during her rehabilitation and would go on to win gold at the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, the first female with quadriplegia to do so.

Complications from her spinal injury forced Stilwell to retire from the national basketball team after Sydney, but her sports career was far from over. She made the switch to wheelchair racing after being spotted by coach Peter Lawless during a coaching workshop in 2004. While a 12-year-old boy beat Stilwell in her first wheelchair race, she put in the work to become a champion once again.

“Standing on the podium multiple times and setting world records was an exhilarating mix of accomplishment, pride, and gratitude,” says Stilwell. “Each achievement represented a culmination of dedicated effort and a testament to what’s possible.”

Ultimately, Stilwell represented Canada at four Paralympic Games (2000, 2008, 2012 and 2016), winning seven medals, including six gold and a silver. Stilwell is also a nine-time world champion and multiple world record holder.

In addition to her athletic accomplishments, Stilwell has excelled in politics and business. She served two terms as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in British Columbia (2013 to 2020) and was the Minister for Social Development and Social Innovation (2015 to 2017). Stilwell is an active member of multiple national and international boards. For 15 years, she oversaw all operational aspects of an international public speaking company.

With success in multiple domains, what are Stilwell’s most memorable career moments?

“Selecting just a few is tough, but some standout moments include putting my name on a ballot and winning a hard-fought election, breaking world records and setting Paralympic records in sports while representing our beautiful country,” she says. “Anytime you have the privilege to stand on a podium and hear your national anthem play is special.”

Stilwell’s focus, energy and persistence as an athlete have undoubtedly also helped her to achieve exceptional results as a leader in the private and public sectors.

“Success in sports instilled in me discipline, teamwork, and a relentless drive to overcome challenges,” explains Stilwell. These qualities have proven invaluable in navigating the world of business, fostering resilience and innovation.”

She adds, “Above all, I’m most proud of consistently pushing my limits, defying odds, and in a way, becoming a source of inspiration for others. They say seeing is believing. When people see what I have done, they sometimes see their own potential. The impact on people’s lives is what truly resonates.”

Stilwell has also given back as an ambassador, presenter, coach and motivational speaker. This includes raising funds so that all kids have the opportunity to be involved in organized sport, sharing the importance of healthy living with audiences of varying sizes and types and speaking about injury prevention.

“Looking ahead, I aspire to continue contributing to my community, exploring new horizons in business, and further advocating for inclusion and empowerment.”

Success, says Stilwell, cannot be reached in isolation.

“It’s essential to remember that achievements are rarely solitary,” she remarks, adding that they are the result of collaboration, mentorship, and determination.

Stilwell continues, “I have been fortunate to be surrounded by incredible people, especially my husband Mark, who always encourages me to follow my dreams. I’m excited to continue learning, evolving, and embracing opportunities to make a lasting impact.”

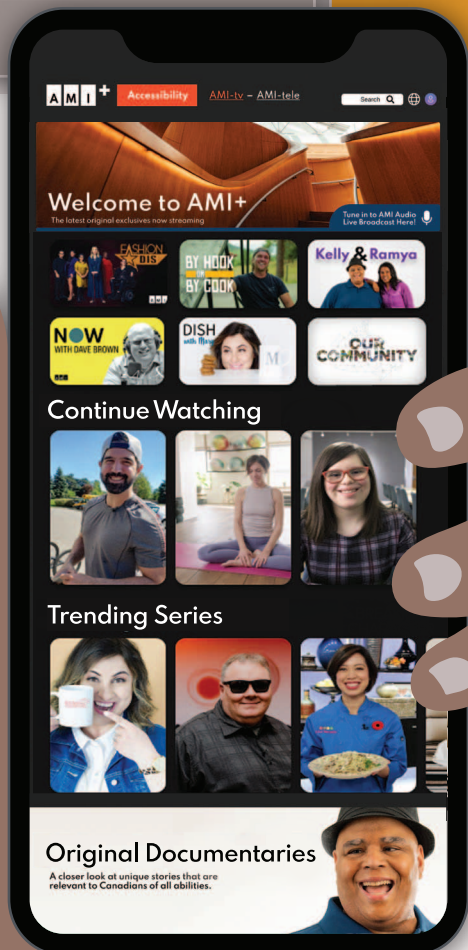
And while she is no stranger to awards, distinctions and accolades, how does Stilwell feel about her induction into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame?

“The induction is a humbling recognition of my journey and the collective efforts of those who supported me along the way,” she says. “It reinforces the importance of representation and the potential to affect positive change.”



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the 40th Annual Great Valentine Gala



The incredible milestone of the 40th Annual Great Valentine Gala is upon us, and preparations are in full swing. As we look back on four decades of tradition, it is truly amazing to see how far we have come. The festivities will once again grace the grand halls of the Fairmont Royal York Hotel on February 10, 2024.

“**W**ith our 40th Gala approaching, it is both humbling and awe-inspiring to reflect on our journey,” says the Honourable Vim Kochhar, Founder and Chair of the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP). “Over the years, this event has helped us raise over \$35 million to support CFPDP’s important work. It has also helped us to create real change for Canada’s disability community. As we prepare for what promises to be our most remarkable celebration yet, I extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who continues to support us. So many of you have been here since the very early days. Together, we are making Canada the best country in the world for people with disabilities.”

CFPDP’s Valentine-themed gala is the Foundation’s top fundraising event. The funds raised have played a pivotal role in enabling CFPDP to support other charitable organizations, programs, services, special events and accessible housing for Canadians with physical disabilities.

However, this event is about more than just fundraising. It also serves as a platform to raise awareness, highlight the accomplishments of individuals with physical disabilities, and acknowledge the outstanding contributions made by corporations and organizations in support of Canada’s disability communities.

“Coming together to celebrate greatness at this spectacular, highly anticipated event is a testament to our community’s collective commitment to positive change,” says Hon. Kochhar. “The Gala is where the joy of supporting a meaningful cause brings us all together, year after year.”

Once again, CFPDP will honour a new group of

incredibly deserving award recipients in 2024. The Corporate Awards, the King Clancy Award and the Honourable David C. Onley Award will be presented that evening.

Gala attendees are also in for a special treat as the evening’s entertainment will be delivered by Canada’s beloved comic genius, Rick Mercer. Best known for his work on CBC Television’s *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, *Made in Canada* and *The Rick Mercer Report*, he will bring his bestselling memoir “Talking to Canadians” to life on stage.

“Rick Mercer is the perfect performer for a landmark gala that celebrates people with disabilities because of his unwavering support to inclusivity and accessibility,” says Hon. Kochhar. “Besides being a national treasure, he has significantly raised the profile of Paralympic sport and disability through his work. Rick also featured many prominent public figures from the disability community on his TV show. We are very excited that he has agreed to perform.”

Event organizers are expecting hundreds of enthusiastic supporters to join the 2024 Great Valentine Gala festivities. Long-time emcee and CFPDP supporter Suhana Meharchand returns to host the evening’s activities. Veteran CBC sports broadcaster and CFPDP director Rob Snoek will join us as we prepare a special send-off for Canada’s 2024 Paralympic team. There will also be a delicious dinner, and as tradition dictates, the Gala’s beloved Tombola game will make a triumphant return.

Sponsorship opportunities and tickets for CFPDP’s 40th Annual Great Valentine Gala are available through our events team via whynot@cfpdp.com or (416) 760-7351.



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GENEROUS DONORS HELP CFPDP CREATE \$500,000 IN ENDOWMENT FUNDS

Thanks to the incredible generosity of three donors, half a million dollars in new endowment funds are set or being finalized to help students with disabilities attain post-secondary degrees that could lead them to top-level corporate positions.

In recent years, creating endowment funds for these learners has been an important focus for the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP). The initiative is part of CFPDP's "A Seat at the Table" program, which aims to increase the representation of people with physical disabilities in Canada's corporate boardrooms.

"Higher education equips disabled students with the knowledge, skills and critical thinking they need to become the leaders of tomorrow," says the Honourable Vim Kochhar, Founding Chair of CFPDP. "The scholarships and bursaries made possible by these endowment funds help alleviate the financial burdens of getting a university or college education. We are profoundly grateful to the generous donors whose support will have a lasting impact."

The Thorpe Family Foundation Award in partnership with CFPDP was established at the University of Western Ontario's Ivey Business School. Beginning in the 2023-2024 year, it is being awarded to students entering the Honours Business Administration program (HBA1) with a self-identified disability and demonstrated academic achievement, as well as advocacy and leadership skills. This award was established with a generous gift from the Thorpe Family Foundation and CFPDP.

At Queen's University, the Duncan and Michelle Sinclair Foundation – CFPDP Bursary is being established in partnership with "A Seat at the Table." It will be awarded on the basis of demonstrated financial need to students with a physical disability in any year of any faculty or school at Queen's University. The bursary is being established with a generous gift from the Duncan and Michelle Sinclair Foundation.

"Duncan has always been a passionate supporter and advocate for people with disabilities, both personally and as Chair for Canada and Chile at Deloitte," says Hon. Kochhar. "His involvement with CFPDP dates back many years. In addition to chairing the 'A Seat at the Table' Selection Board, he has chaired our Valentine Gala and served as the honoured guest speaker at the Canadian Disability Hall

of Fame induction luncheon. Duncan also provides us with substantial ongoing support, leadership and advice, which ensures we can continue our work to make Canada the best country for people with disabilities."

Additionally, CFPDP is working to finalize an endowment fund at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University.

Create a Legacy

CFPDP is inviting donors to give \$100,000 and asking universities and colleges to provide matching funds. As an incentive, CFPDP will add \$10,000 to every fund that is established. CFPDP also works with donors on the endowment fund naming, creating a legacy for the donor, their family, a family foundation, business or otherwise. In addition, CFPDP will issue a tax/donation receipt for your donation. This creates a \$220,000 endowment fund to grant awards and bursaries in perpetuity using the investment proceeds.

Donors who wish to make a meaningful gift of less than \$100,000 are also encouraged to contact CFPDP.

Earlier endowment funds have been established by CFPDP at York University, Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson) and Pearson College in Vancouver.

The Asper Foundation has made a gift of \$5 million to establish the Asper Foundation Entrance Bursaries, an endowment fund to support students with financial need at the University of Manitoba. In partnership with CFPDP, the endowment fund has a mandate to dedicate five \$1,000 bursaries each year to support students with physical disabilities.

Other schools have set aside hundreds of thousands of dollars and are waiting for matching donors. CFPDP is speaking with additional universities and possible corporate donors, asking them to participate and help broaden the program across Canada.

"Expanding the pool of qualified candidates with physical disabilities for corporate boardroom positions necessitates greater access to education," says Hon. Kochhar. "To facilitate career advancement, we must continue to address the financial challenges disabled students face by creating more bursaries and scholarships. I am inspired by the generous support our endowment funds project has received to date and I wholeheartedly believe others will come forward to create their own meaningful legacy."



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1993 Margaret McLeod John Gibbons Counsel Lieutenant Colonel Edwin A. Baker Rick Hansen Robert Wilson Jackson, M.D. André Viger	2000 Sarah Thompson Sam Sullivan Eugene Reimer Morris Milner, Ph.D. Amy Doofenbaker, DVM Tom Hainey Ivy Granstrom Jamie MacDougall, Ph.D.	2008 Adrian Anantawan Linda Crabtree Dr. Geoff Fernie Daniel Westley Jeff Healey David Hingsburger Diane Roy Gary and Jill Taylor	2015 Lauren Barwick Bernard Gluckstein Rick Mercer Terry Kelly Tim Frick Marni Abbott-Peter
1994 Arnold Boldt William Cameron Beryl Potter Rev. Robert L. Rumball	2001 Rev. Stephanie McClellan Jo-Anne Robinson Robert Steadward, Ph.D. Mae Brown and Joan Mactavish	2009 Colette Bourgonje Alan Dean David Shannon Jeff Tiessen	2016 Todd Nicholson Jim Sanders Shirley Shelby Rob Snoek
1995 Bruce Halliday, M.D. Albin Théophile Jousse, M.D. Jeremy Rempel Mona Winberg	2002 Joanne (Bouw) Berdan Jack Donohue Brian Keown Dr. Charles Tator, M.D.	2010 Archie Allison Benoît Huot Brian McKeever Robin McKeever Celia Southward	2017 James G. Kyte Alvin Law The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney
1996 Arlette Lefebvre, M.D. Joanne Mucz Vicki Keith Munro Walter Wu	2003 Carlos Costa Johanna Johnson David Lepofsky, LL.B., LL.M. Henry Wohler	2011 Ann Caine Tracey Ferguson Robert Hampson Joyce Thompson	2018 Brian MacPherson Tracy Schmitt Richard "Bear" Peter Bradley Bowden
1997 Jeff Adams Alice Laine / Audrey Morrice The Honourable David Onley William John (Whipper Billy) Watson	2004 Peter Eriksson Lucy and Robert Fletcher The Honourable Chantal Petitclerc Patrick Jarvis	2012 Raymond Cohen The Honourable David Crombie Stephanie Dixon Ramesh Ferris	2019 Tim Cormode Martha Sandoval Gustafson Meenu Sikand
1998 Edmund Henry (Harry) Botterell M.D. The Honourable Lincoln Alexander Gary Birch, Ph.D. Frank Bruno	2005 Jeneece Edroff Michael Edgson June Hooper Steven Fletcher	2013 Jerry and Annie Johnston Sudarshan Gautam The Honourable Vim Kochhar Mark Wafer	2020 Vivian Berkeley The Honourable Carla Qualtrough Frank Folino
1999 H. Clifford Chadderton Leslie Lam Pier Morten Allan Simpson	2006 Elizabeth Grandbois Joanne Smith Lauren Woolstencroft	2014 Elisabeth Walker-Young Chris Williamson	2021 Josh Dueck Lorin MacDonald Greg Westlake
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* To learn more, please visit aseatatthetable.cfpdp.com

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Honouring Laura Dottori-Attanasio

As the recently appointed *President and CEO* of **Element Fleet Management**, Laura Dottori-Attanasio is continuing to drive positive change. It is something she has done throughout her career and in her personal life as a passionate community volunteer.

“All aspects of belonging are incredibly important to me: diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility,” she says. “I believe it is essential that everyone feels like they can be their true selves whether at home or at work. When everyone feels respected and valued, it creates a stronger society and brighter future for us all. I am proud to lead initiatives that generate awareness and help drive progress.”

The importance of doing the right thing was instilled in Dottori-Attanasio when she was growing up in a small town. She began volunteering at a young age and credits her parents for this early start to her journey of giving back. Today, she continues to make a difference with heartfelt enthusiasm, using her voice and platform to promote lasting transformation and a more equitable future.

When it comes to progress, Dottori-Attanasio is having a profound impact. She spent 14 years as an executive with CIBC, including almost seven years as Chief Risk Officer. Dottori-Attanasio is particularly proud of a successful program created during her tenure to hire people with disabilities into the bank’s Risk Department.

“I take great pride in my accomplishments related to creating inclusive and equitable experiences for everyone,” says Dottori-Attanasio. “I firmly believe that regardless of our backgrounds or the quality of our lives, we all need support and assistance. Therefore, I find it crucial to extend our support to others whenever possible.”

Advocating and making a sustainable impact are immeasurably important to Dottori-Attanasio. In her new role, she is ensuring that Element remains fully committed to the power of inclusivity across its leadership team, workforce, and supply chain.

“We understand that our strength lies in our



Laura Dottori-Attanasio will serve as Honourary Co-Chair for CFPDP’s 40th Annual Great Valentine Gala.

differences,” says Dottori-Attanasio. “We strive to create an environment where our employees, suppliers, clients, and shareholders can be true to themselves and feel secure within the Element community. Through our inclusive approach, we have established a solid foundation to cultivate a culture of belonging and acceptance.”

That inclusive culture starts at the top with Element’s leadership team. Women make up 56% of the company’s Board of Directors, 11% are from culturally diverse backgrounds, and there is 11% disability representation. “It is important that these voices are reflected, heard and respected,” says Dottori-Attanasio.

The representation of people with disabilities is increasing across other Canadian corporate boards too, thanks to the efforts of Dottori-Attanasio and her “A Seat at the Table” Selection Board colleagues. This group of top CEOs, media and non-profit executives, and university chancellors is working to identify qualified candidates, promote them for board positions and raise awareness of the benefits of diversity that includes disability.

“Laura is an unwavering champion for Canadians with disabilities, a passionate advocate for diversity and equality, and a firm believer in the limitless abilities of all individuals,” says the Honourable Vim Kochhar, Founding Chair of CFPDP. “She is a cherished longtime friend of our Foundation who generously shares her time whenever it is needed. We are so proud to work with her to help diversify Canada’s boardrooms. With Laura on our team, success is inevitable.”

“I firmly support CFPDP’s goal to see at least 1% of corporate directors in Canada identify with a disability,” she says. “There is considerable benefit to having greater representation of people with disabilities around leader-

ship tables. People with disabilities often bring unique perspectives to the table, providing invaluable insight into new markets, products, and services that would otherwise be overlooked. Having these skills on hand can help an organization to better understand the needs of their clients and potential markets and gain a competitive edge by driving innovation and creative problem-solving within their teams.”

Indeed, creativity and teamwork have the remarkable ability to drive solutions and real change. Case in point, Element is committed to supplier diversity with a network of over 4,800 diverse suppliers to service and meet the needs and goals of their clients. In 2022 alone, Element spent \$1.75 billion with diverse suppliers.

“We are committed to growing supplier diversity at Element,” says Dottori-Attanasio. “Our efforts create jobs and transform communities.”

And while Dottori-Attanasio and the Element team continue positively transforming the communities where they live, they are also sowing the seeds for a workplace that is even more inclusive than it is today.

“It is all about creating opportunities to continue moving the dial,” she says. “Our priorities are focused on gender and racial equality, people with a disability, and LGBTQ2+.”

Giving back is part of who Dottori-Attanasio is at her core. Beyond her executive roles, she has been creating transformational change for decades.

As a volunteer fundraiser, she helped the Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada raise more than \$68 million towards a \$100 million campaign to support vulnerable children and youth.

From 2018 to 2019, Dottori-Attanasio was Major Giving Individual Chair for the United Way of Greater Toronto, leading and inspiring 100 senior community leaders to raise over \$60 million.

She also played a key role in launching a successful \$10 million capital campaign for the Centennial Infant and Child Centre Foundation, a preschool that brings together children of differing abilities, which three of her four children attended.

Her efforts have been recognized with multiple awards. These include Outstanding Volunteer from the Association of Fundraising Professionals Greater Toronto Chapter in 2019 and CFPDP’s King Clancy Award in 2020.

“Not everyone begins their journey in life with the same advantages, but it is within our power to help pave the way for their success,” says Dottori-Attanasio. “Programs like the Centennial Infant and Child Centre hold immense importance to me. These types of programs are crucial

because they offer a safe and nurturing environment for children of all abilities to learn and grow together. By fostering an inclusive atmosphere, children at these centers learn from one another, embracing and accepting each other’s differences and abilities from an early age. This early exposure to diversity helps create a more inclusive society, where individuals are comfortable and accepting of one another.”

Dottori-Attanasio adds, “I am deeply committed to supporting these programs as they play a vital role in shaping a more inclusive and accepting future for all children.”

A strong believer that the right education can help students succeed in their chosen field, Dottori-Attanasio also recognizes that we all need a bit of help at some point in our lives. That is why she and her family support inclusion in education, setting up the Dottori-Attanasio Centennial Scholars Award in Commerce at UBC’s Sauder School of Business and the Dottori-Attanasio Family Scholarship at Centennial College.

“Investing in students by enabling opportunities to study at post-secondary institutions is an investment in our future,” she says. “These scholarships are important because they provide a chance to level the playing field, opening more doors for students of all backgrounds to learn, grow, and start a fulfilling career.”

In her own career, Dottori-Attanasio finds fulfillment in being an inclusive leader, fostering an environment where every voice is valued, and diversity is celebrated as a source of strength. We asked her what it takes to lead from this perspective.

“Firstly, I think it is important to be self-reflective,” she says. “What is your lived experience? How might it be different from others you interact with? How can you offer empathy and understanding and support to meet people where they are?”

Dottori-Attanasio continues, “Our culture at Element promotes an environment where we respect and leverage our differences to reach our full potential. Through my leadership at Element and my work [with] ‘A Seat at the Table,’ I’m proud to help influence greater inclusion, particularly as it relates to championing greater representation for people in leadership positions who identify with a disability.”

Simply put, Dottori-Attanasio says, “Inclusion matters – we all need to work together toward a future where everyone can thrive.”

“Laura is doing her part and more, sparking a ripple effect that changes lives everywhere she goes,” says Hon. Kochhar. “She is a remarkable changemaker who gives her entire heart in service.”

“Inclusion matters – we all need to work together toward a future where everyone can thrive.”

– Laura Dottori-Attanasio



Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons

FUTURE EVENTS

The Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons presents

the **40th** Annual Great Valentine Gala
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